

# HRB Newsletter

Volume I Issue 3

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**The Annual Open Enrollment period is October 1-31, 2011.** Enrollment packets will be sent to your home or mailing address the first week of October. Benefit elections take effect January 1, 2012. If you don't have a packet, you can still enroll via the web at [www.mylacountybenefits.com](http://www.mylacountybenefits.com). Annual Enrollment Highlights, Quick Reference Guides, Comparison Charts as well as other information can be found at <http://dhr.lacounty.info>. It's important to review the information in the enrollment guide carefully and consider your family needs for 2012. For example: will you or a family member be having surgery, expecting a new baby or need orthodontia care? This may affect the benefits you wish to purchase for 2012.

**Health Care Spending Accounts, Dependent Care Spending Accounts, Elective Annual Leave (EAL) and medical insurance waivers** do not rollover each year. To continue the level of benefits chosen, you must elect to do so each year. Megaflex participants should note special provisions in their enrollment packet that explain taxable cash limits for EAL payouts as well as the County's usage sequence policy when deciding to purchase EAL. Employees who fail to submit EAL Reimbursement forms by the deadline or use EAL by December 31st of each year, will forfeit unused hours.



## *Did you know ...*

- Long Term Disability (LTD), is an income replacement plan that pays up to 60% of your monthly income, for up to 24 months, in the event you become ill and cannot work. You may be eligible for LTD after 6 months of leave and if you meet certain LTD criteria. You may also elect LTD Health, which is designed to help you continue your County medical coverage while receiving LTD benefits. This is a valuable benefit for those in need and you should thoroughly review the LTD and LTD Health information in your benefits package to determine whether or not you wish to elect LTD or the LTD Health coverage or upgrade your benefits (different core benefits apply to the various Cafeteria Plans, check your enrollment booklet for details). If you do not elect LTD Health and become ill and want to purchase the LTD Health plan, there is a two year wait before you can purchase this benefit on county sponsored plans.
- You can enroll your eligible adult children in your medical and dental plans until their 26th birthday, regardless of student or marital status provided they are not eligible for other coverage, such as a plan from their own job or their spouses' job.

## Health Spending Accounts

There are no benefit changes due to Health Care reform for 2012; however in 2013 the maximum amount you may contribute to the Health Care Spending account will decrease from \$400 per month/\$4800 year to \$200 per month/\$2400 a year. You should consider this if you plan any major health expenses such as braces, or laser eye surgery. You have until June 30th of the following year to file a claim for expenses in the previous year; any unused monies will be forfeited.



Under California law, there are many regulations regarding breaks periods that we should be aware of. The following information addresses some of the most commonly asked questions regarding break and lunch periods. For specific situations, contact HRB, as there may be special Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) provisions not specified below.

**Q: How long must I work before getting a lunch break?**

A: Under California law, any employee including hourly employees, must be provided with a thirty-minute meal break when they work more than 5 hours in a day. The meal break should be at mid point in the workday, typically after 4 hours.

**Q: Some of my staff sit at their desk and work through lunch or break time...is this acceptable?**

A: Working through lunch and breaks may present FLSA qualifying overtime hours. Supervisors must take special care to ensure that employees are relieved of work during breaks. As employees, we must also take care to not cause situations of compensation.

**Q: Can I work through my breaks to leave early?**

A: No. working through your rest and/or meal period does not entitle you to leave early or arrive late.

**Q: Can I have additional breaks or several mini breaks if I am a smoker?**

A: No. Breaks are based on hours worked and there is no requirement under the law to allow for extra or several mini breaks.

**Q: I sit at a computer all day and don't do very labor intensive work; what if I don't feel that I need to take a break?**

A: Although assignments may not be labor intensive, taking breaks helps with eye strain, repetitive hand motions, concentration, stress and general fatigue. Breaks should be observed to prevent and reduce injuries and over exertion.

**Q: Can I combine my morning and/or afternoon break to have a longer lunch break?**

A: No. Breaks cannot be accumulated or carried over.

**Q: Do I get to determine when I want to take a break?**

A: Break periods are coordinated by management based on business needs such as coverage and maintaining the continuity of work.

**Q: Can I take stretching breaks?**

A: The County recognizes the need for employees to take micro breaks such as stretching to relieve repetitive hand motion, getting up from your desk and closing your eyes to reduce eye strain. Such micro breaks should not interfere with the work duties. For example: closing your eyes should not turn into a 15 minute nap and getting up from your desk should not turn into disrupting coworkers.

**Q: Are bathroom trips counted as breaks?**

A: Bathroom breaks are not to be counted as part of the break time, but employees should not abuse bathroom breaks by spending prolonged periods away from work.

### Reminders :



- Don't forget to enroll for your benefits by October 31, 2011 or next year could be scary.
- For contacts and information, visit the [HRB website](#)
- Elective Annual Leave Reimbursements forms will go out November 15, 2011.

